

**South Shore Regional School Board
School Review 2015-2016
School Options Committee Meeting at Bridgewater Jr./Sr. High School
BHS/PVEC Families of Schools
Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 6:30 p.m.**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Gary Walker introduced himself and explained that he was hired by the South Shore Regional School Board to facilitate the school review of Bridgewater and Park View families of schools – the two high schools and each of its feeder schools. Tonight’s meeting is to inform the public of what scenarios the School Options Committee (SOC) has developed and is taking into consideration. The SOC will also consider any new information the public provides.

Mr. Walker is the liaison between the SOC and the Board and he assists the co-chairs with the meeting proceedings. If the SOC requests information, Mr. Walker will inform the Superintendent, who will request the information from staff. It was noted that the logical place to begin the review process is at the high school level, because the SOC cannot touch elementary schools in their programming and grades 7 to 9 are currently under review by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. No recommendation will come into effect until September 2017, at the earliest, due to the construction at Park View.

Mr. Walker does not have a vote, nor does the Recording Secretary. The SOC is comprised of School Advisory Council members from each school involved (from which two co-chairs were elected) and a community representative for each family of schools. The Committee will make a recommendation to the Board for what they feel is in the best interests of the students.

Schools involved include: Bayview Community School, Bluenose Academy, Bridgewater Elementary School, Bridgewater Jr./Sr. High School, Hebbville Academy, Newcombville Elementary School, Park View Education Center, Pentz Elementary School, and Petite Rivière Elementary School.

Mr. Walker reviewed the attached presentation (Appendix A) explaining the school review process and directives, as well as the mandate and objectives of the SOC. He noted that this is a process that has been put into place by the province to allow the larger community to get involved and have a say. The second public meeting will be to go through the scenarios and their drop downs (implications). The third public meeting will explain what the committee will present to the Board.

The following information is a detail, as accurate as possible, of the Question and Answer period for the public. NOTE: Although the public was asked to use the microphone and write their questions and comments on the paper provided, most speakers did not use the microphone and no one wrote their inquiries.

- Clarification on the Board’s accountability of the outcomes in this process.

- The Board is required to listen to and accept the recommendation of the SOC. The Board is not obligated to put that recommendation into place.
- Public engagement is mandated?
 - Yes it is.
- Regarding recommendation number two, which moves grades 10-12 from BHS to PVEC, what happens to BHS once it is left with only grades 7 to 9 students?
 - The SOC has not done the drop downs yet. Doing the drop downs will be the next step for the SOC.
- There is no option to move PVEC students to Bridgewater?
 - BHS could not accommodate all of PVEC students.
 - After the renovation at PVEC, the school will be able to accommodate 900 students.
- What would the amalgamation do to class sizes?
 - Example – you might have four students who want to take biology at one school and 11 at the other school; amalgamation would offer more opportunity for the class to occur with the 15 students, while it likely would not be offered with only four students.
 - There could be more sections per class, depending upon the number of students registering for various courses (i.e., if 80 students registered for biology, several sections of biology would be offered).
 - The Human Resources Director of the SSRSB indicated that there would be no loss of permanent staff by sending BHS grades 10-12 students to PVEC. Term teachers have to re-apply for jobs every year.
- How were members of the SOC selected?
 - This is mandated by the provincial School Review Policy – the chair of each school's advisory council and one other member from the SAC (the second member cannot be a teacher or principal, but has to be a parent or community rep). There are two additional community representatives, one for each family of schools, who either live or run a business in the area they represent.
- Why is there no principal or designate on SOC? Why is there no representation for the municipalities, where there are possible changes to our schools' configurations?
 - Facilitator has no say in who is on the SOC. The provincial policy guides the membership, as noted above.
- Cannot believe that the SOC work meetings are not public.
- Issues with the Board web site and the minutes of meetings referencing attachments and then finding no attachments.
 - All of the attachments are now on the Board's web site.
- Issues with publicizing information about the public meeting two weeks in advance, as per the Policy; specifically, that it wasn't in the paper.
 - The meeting was publicized in a variety of ways, well in advance of the meeting.
- Issues with a wide variety of school community groups being invited to the public meeting.
 - The meeting was publicized in a variety of ways and it is open to anyone wishing to attend.
- Are class sizes capped in high school the way they are in elementary school?
 - No, with the exception of specialized programs, such as Skilled Trades.
 - New school construction accommodates for class sizes of 30.

- Since so much money is being spent on PVEC to get to a 900 student capacity, is there any likelihood we're not going to go with Scenario 2 (moving grades 10-12 from BHS to PVEC)?
 - This is a new process, and the drop downs from junior high would still have to be considered. That is what the SOC has been tasked with.
- Why would you bring over 200 grade nine students into a senior high school?
 - It is one of the scenarios the SOC is exploring.
- This is a total waste of money and time if the Board already knows what they're doing.
- How much of this decision is a foregone conclusion and how authentic is this process? It is outrageous that the people who can answer that question are not in the room to answer it. The process has been thrown in front of the School Board as a way of shielding it from valid questions being asked by the public. We would like to have the decision makers at the next public meeting.
- It is difficult to know which scenario to choose because we don't know what will be lost by choosing one over the other.
- The student enrolments are for the 2017-2018 school year. What about international students?
 - They cannot be taken into consideration, as the number changes every year and there is never a guarantee as to how many students will be coming to our schools.
- Is there a difference between the results of student outcomes for students in a small school compared to a large school?
 - Both schools do well, even with the different programming. One is not deemed better than the other.
- Are dates set for the next public meetings?
 - Yes. February 25 is the next public meeting and it will be held at Park View Education Centre. The third and final meeting is scheduled for March 23.
- Which meeting will the fate of Bayview Community School be discussed?
 - It will be part of the drop downs and will be discussed at the next public meeting.
- Are you removing the politics from this decision? Are the long-term benefits of the students being considered? Are you looking at the convenience of parents dropping their children off at school? If you're really doing what is best for the students, and leaving the parents and politics out of it, PVEC is the logical choice for grades 10-12.
 - No politics are involved and there is no bias. SOC will choose the option that will most benefit the students.
- There is a lot of innocence in the grade nine students and they should not be put in with the grade 12 students.
 - The reason the grade 9s are there as one of the scenarios is because the province is moving in that direction of having high schools configured as grades 9-12.
 - SOC have to represent what the parents of the school want.
- So you are representing the parents, not the students.
- Where are the students on this Committee to represent the student body?
- It will be difficult for a group of 20 people to come to a consensus.
- Has any thought been given on how to minimize the impact for students, in terms of transitioning students from a small school into a large school?
 - Yes, this has been part of the SOC's discussions and there would be recommendations included in the SOC's report, if it chooses that option, for transition planning.

- The SOC can make special requests, such as changing the name of a school, as part of whatever recommendation they make.
- There are parents on the Committee who have students in elementary school as well, and those younger students will also be kept in mind.
- What do we know about enrolments at the elementary schools?
 - The SOC has been given projected enrolments up to 2020-2021. As with all schools across the province, enrolments continue to decline. The first programs cut are the non-essential ones, such as French Immersion and Advanced Placement (AP).
- If Bayview closed, where would those students go?
 - This has not yet been discussed.
- Request for members to introduce themselves.
 - Siobhan Doyle, SAC Chair for BES
 - Melissa Risser, SAC Chair for BA
 - Stephanie Martin, Parent Rep for BES
 - Kim Benjamin, Parent Rep for BHS
 - Sarah Tingley, Parent Rep for PRES
 - Andrea McGinnis, SAC Chair for BHS
 - Erica Moore, Parent Rep for BCS
 - John Biebesheimer, SAC Chair for BCS
 - Leif Helmer, SAC Chair for PRES
 - Heather McKenzie-Carey, Community Rep for PVEC
 - Shelley Mann, SAC Co-Chair for PVEC
 - Pam Hebb, Parent Rep for NES
 - Anne Burgess, SAC Chair for NES
 - Iris Charlton, Parent Rep for HA
 - Tina Grace, SAC Co-Chair for PVEC
 - Allen Sullivan, SAC Chair for PES
- Need to see the drop downs of the scenarios – enrolments, programming, etc.
- Make your decision based on future possibilities to attract people to the area, rather than possibly closing schools, which would not encourage young families to relocate here.
- If BHS grades 10-12 students move to PVEC, would they lose AP or could PVEC have both IB and AP?
 - Programming is part of what the Committee is looking at.
- Please take into consideration the special needs of students, whether it be a physical disability or an advanced learner; don't let them get lost in the shuffle.
 - This is a learning process for the SOC, as well as the public. Part of the reason for these meetings is to get your input. Ultimately, the children are the priority. If you have questions, you need to get them to us. We will consider everything. Don't shoot the messenger. The elected Board will make the final decision.
- What are the implications for student athletes? Consider this in the drop downs.
- There will be difficulty in booking practice times for sports teams.
- What would happen with students who would need bussing? What are the costs?
 - All of the buses currently go through the town, so there is no increase in cost and every student would be accommodated.

- When you do the drop downs, will you show the cost benefits of each one? If you close a school, how much will it save?
 - There has been no talk of closing any schools, but in the drop downs, there are all kinds of scenarios that can happen. There is a separate item with this School Board involving PES and PRES, which is still being explored. However, it is not part of the SOC's mandate to discuss schools that the elected Board previously closed.
- Where does the information/data come from that the committee is using to create the scenarios?
 - All of the information comes from School Board staff based on what the SOC requests.
- Where does what you heard tonight come into play?
 - All of the information heard/received this evening will be considered at the SOC's next meeting.
- Given the amount of work involved, data received, and the size of the Committee, it seems unworkable.
 - At first, it seemed like that. The Committee quickly realized that there are really only a few options to explore that are realistic and/or practical.
- Keep in mind that some kind of programming needs to be in place so that students on the autism spectrum have appropriate transition planning.
 - This is definitely a concern that is being examined.
 - If anyone at BHS has questions, feel free to contact Kim or Andrea and they will be sure to bring your questions to the Committee.
- Was there ever a consideration to take the Bayview students and move them to the Bridgewater schools, for example, the grades P-5 students go to BES and the grades 6-9 students go to BHS, and the grades 10-12 would still go to PVEC?
 - This has not been considered, but it is something the Committee will look at.
- There are 450 students at BHS, at 72% utilization. Take Scenario 2, and put all the 7-9 students at BHS. Look at re-zoning the boundaries.
 - The SOC currently has a request in to the Board's Transportation Department to provide a map indicating where students live, with no boundaries in place. This will be examined at the next SOC meeting.
 - Many of the SOC members are from elementary schools and are very sensitive to the needs of the younger students. Every scenario will have implications at every level, not only at the high school level.
- Have the New Germany schools been taken into consideration?
 - No, because they are not part of the family of schools for Bridgewater or Park View.
- Commending the Committee for taking on this task.
- The School Board is not funded based on programming.
 - No, but when budgets are cut, it is usually the smaller programs (those that are not part of the public school program) that absorb the impact.
- The amount of funding the Board receives for IB and AP is minimal, unless that has changed over the past few years.
- Difficult to believe that 240 students can be transported to PVEC without additional costs to the Board.

- There are 19 buses that land at PVEC that carry small numbers of students. Since the buses are coming through town anyway, there would be no additional costs to pick the students up at hub sites.
- Compliments to the committee for the work that they are doing; it is a very difficult job.
- Seems to be a disconnect when looking at the scenarios; they need to be student-centered. Program offerings are not the only topic that need to be addressed. You have to look at the whole community.
- What would the program look like if you move the grade 9s to PVEC?
 - The enrolment numbers go up, but the grade 9s have dedicated programming, so they must have a specific number of minutes for each subject. The grade nines would inevitably take away from certain areas in the high school.
- Can the Committee present more than one scenario to the Board?
 - They can talk about three, give the reason why/why not, but it has to be one final option presented to the Board in its recommendation report.
 - We all have to make a decision based on what is best for the students.
 - The boundaries that have been in place since 1982 may change. There will be an impact for every person on the SOC with each scenario, except the Status Quo.
 - We are looking at all of the scenarios, and will examine all the drop downs for each scenario. Right now, you are seeing how far the Committee has come since its first meeting. This is a region we are working for and we will choose the option that is the most beneficial for all of the students involved. We want to thoroughly examine all of the options, which is why we want to hear from you, to see if you have an idea that we have not thought of.
- How can the public contact Committee Members?
 - Each school has its SAC's information on their website.
- Is it a definite 2017 changeover?
 - Decisions on the high school cannot be made until the renovations at Park View are complete and we have been told that the renovations are on time, which is September 2017.
 - The Committee wants to emphasize that they are coming up with recommendations, but it is the Board who will make final decision.
- Thank you for stepping up and being an intermediary and risking all of your work being for nothing, because it may come to that.

Mr. Walker thanked the public for coming out and thanked the Committee. "We did not know what this would look like, because a lot of people would not want to sit in front of the community and hear what is being said. Thank you for being so open with us."

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.